

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A communication assistance process performed by a communication assistance device connected to a plurality of user terminals, the communication assistance process comprising the steps of:

- 5           receiving communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;  
            acquiring assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;  
            determining whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;  
10           determining whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;  
            adjusting the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination step that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination step that voice data is included in the  
15           assistance data; and  
            providing assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

2. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

- 20           storing a vocabulary list; and  
            comparing the vocabulary list with the communication data received in the communication data receiving step, and extracting one or more keywords included in the vocabulary list from the communication data;  
            wherein assistance data that is associated with the keywords extracted in the  
25           keyword extraction step is acquired in the assistance data acquisition step.

3. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

calculating an occurrence frequency of each keyword extracted in the keyword extraction step; and

5 extracting keywords having a high occurrence frequency from the keywords whose occurrence frequency was calculated in the frequency calculation step;

wherein assistance data associated with the keywords having a high occurrence frequency is acquired from amongst assistance data associated with the keywords extracted in the keyword extraction step.

10 4. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 2, further comprising the step of matching the keywords included in the vocabulary list with the assistance data and storing the same;

wherein the assistance data acquisition step includes searching for and retrieving assistance data that corresponds to each keyword extracted in the keyword  
15 extraction step.

5. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein the assistance data is stored in a computer terminal which is connected to the network, and the assistance data is acquired from the computer terminal in the assistance data acquisition step.

20 6. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein assistance data that includes text data and/or image data is provided to the user terminals in the assistance data provision step if it was determined in the assistance data determination step that the assistance data does not include voice data.

7. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein the sound volume of voice data in the communication data is measured in the communication data determination step; and

the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data is adjusted in the sound volume adjustment step in response to the measurement results of the sound volume measurement step.

8. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising the step of conducting a first evaluation in which the degree of association between the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals and the assistance data is evaluated; and

wherein the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data to be provided to the plurality of user terminals is adjusted in the sound volume adjustment step in response to the results of the first evaluation step.

9. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising the step of conducting a second evaluation in which the degree of association between the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals and the assistance data is evaluated for each user terminal; and

wherein the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data for each user terminal is adjusted in the sound volume adjustment step in response to the results of the second evaluation step.

10. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

storing a vocabulary list; and

comparing the vocabulary list stored in the vocabulary list storage step with the communication data received in the communication data receiving step, and

extracting one or more common keywords included in the communication data from each of the plurality of user terminals and the vocabulary list;

wherein the degree of association with the assistance data is evaluated in the second evaluation step based upon the transmission order of the common keywords

5 from each user terminal; and

the assistance data acquired in the assistance data acquisition step is associated with the common keywords extracted in the common keyword extraction step.

11. The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

10 storing a vocabulary list; and

comparing the vocabulary list stored in the vocabulary list storage step with the communication data received in the communication data receiving step, and extracting one or more common keywords included in the communication data from each of the plurality of user terminals and the vocabulary list; and

15 calculating the transmission frequency of the common keywords for each user terminal;

wherein the degree of association with the assistance data is evaluated in the second evaluation step based upon the transmission frequency of the common keywords; and

20 assistance data acquired in the assistance data acquisition step is associated with the common keywords extracted in the common keyword extraction step.

12. A communication assistance device connected to a plurality of user terminals, the communication assistance device comprising:

receiving means that receives communication data transmitted from the  
25 plurality of user terminals;

assistance data acquisition means that acquires assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

communication data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

5 assistance data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

sound volume adjustment means that adjusts the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination means that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination means that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

10

assistance data provision means that provides assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

13. A communication assistance program that is executed by a computer connected to a plurality of user terminals, the communication assistance program causing the computer to function as:

15

receiving means that receives communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;

assistance data acquisition means that acquires assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

20

communication data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

assistance data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

sound volume adjustment means that adjusts the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination means that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination  
5 means that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

assistance data provision means that provides assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

14. A computer readable storage medium on which is stored a communication assistance program that is executed on a computer connected to a plurality of user  
10 terminals via a network, the program executing the steps of:

receiving communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;  
acquiring assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the received  
15 communication data;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;  
adjusting the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination step that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was  
20 determined in the assistance data determination step that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

providing assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

25